


**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO
GUNNISON RESOURCE AREA
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
April 2001**

Prepared by:
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
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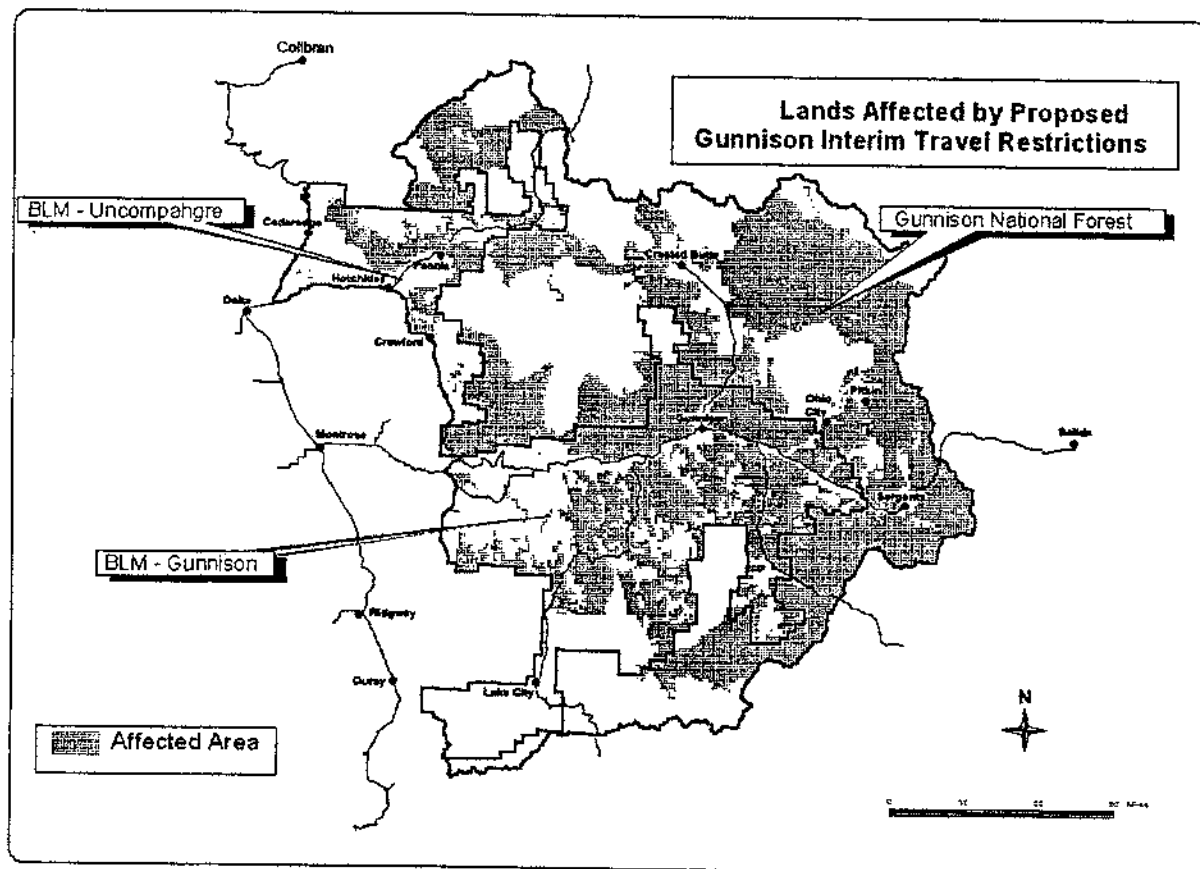
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Proposed Amendment to
Gunnison Resource Management Plan

Environmental Assessment #CO-GUFO-00-027-EA

The Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed. These proposals do not involve significant environmental impacts in context or intensity. We have determined that the analysis of the proposed action supports a finding of no significant impact on the human environment and therefore an EIS will not be prepared.

Barry A. Tollefson / 3/29/01
Barry A. Tollefson Date
Manager
Gunnison Field Office



Proposed Amendment to Standard Management and Management Unit Prescriptions for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and designations in the Gunnison Resource Management Plan, February, 1993

This Proposed Amendment to the Gunnison Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved in February 1993, will affect existing designations for wheeled, motorized and non-motorized mechanical off-highway vehicle use on all public lands administered by the Gunnison Field Office (GFO) where that use is now permitted seasonally or yearlong. This Proposed Amendment will affect the management prescriptions for part or all of some Management Units described and shown in the subject RMP. Standard Management Direction for Off-Road Vehicle use, as shown on pages 2-13 and 2-14 of the RMP, will also be changed by this Proposed Amendment. This Proposed Amendment will not close any routes or trails that are existing, established and regularly used as of January 12, 2001, anywhere on public lands in the GFO. Any routes created after that date without specific agency authorization will be closed to motorized or mechanized use. A map of existing routes and trails is available for review in the Gunnison Field Office. If we have overlooked a route or trail, we will investigate to determine if it was established and receiving regular use as of January 12, 2001, and should therefore be added to the map.

This Proposed Amendment will not affect current motorized or non-motorized access allowed under terms and conditions of a valid BLM-issued or other federal lease, right-of-way, permit, or other forms of approved land use authorizations. Valid existing rights will not be affected. Authorized agency administrative uses, and motorized or non-motorized vehicular access normally authorized to others during the administration of agency contracts, will not be affected by the Proposed Amendment. Snowmobile use on snow will not be affected by this Proposed Amendment.

The underlying purpose of this Proposed Amendment is to prevent the creation of new, unauthorized transportation routes on the affected lands until more detailed transportation analysis and planning can be done. The fact that a route is authorized for use by this action does not confer any "special status" to that route regarding future planning and management. All existing routes will be considered during subsequent route-by-route transportation planning, in close cooperation with the public, to determine which should remain in use, which should be closed, and the appropriate types of use for each.

STANDARD MANAGEMENT FOR THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AFFECTED BY THIS PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE GUNNISON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Description of the standard management for motorized vehicular traffic language for the Gunnison RMP, pages 2-13 and 2-14, dated February, 1993:

Unless otherwise specified in management unit prescriptions, public lands in the planning area will be open to motorized vehicular travel. Maps in Appendix F display Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) designations for the RMP. Some roads will continue to be kept closed in the spring or other seasons until resource damage will likely not occur. Emergency road closures will occur if unacceptable resource damage occurs. The BLM will continue to recognize and respond to the need for seasonal closures in the planning area in order to prevent or mitigate potential resource damage by installing gates at key access points, for instance, to restrict spring access until roads have dried out.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the language above.

Unless otherwise specified in management unit prescriptions, travel by wheeled, motorized or non-motorized mechanical vehicles (such as mountain bikes) on public lands administered by the GFO will be limited to existing, established routes and trails. Any travel cross country or off of existing routes will be prohibited unless specifically authorized by the BLM. The only exception to this rule is that motorized or non-motorized mechanical vehicles will be permitted to travel up to 300 feet either side of existing established routes or trails for camping, picnicking, and gathering forest products as long as that use does not result in resource damage. If BLM identifies areas where unacceptable resource damage is occurring, corrective measures will be taken. Snowmobiles may operate on snow outside of designated wilderness unless winter wildlife closures are in effect.

In these areas it will also be prohibited to use a vehicle on a smaller route not intended for that use (e.g. using an ATV or full sized vehicle on a single track trail). The use of motorized vehicles will not be permitted cross-country or off existing established routes to retrieve game but mechanical, non-motorized game carts will be permitted. The Field Manager may, at his or her discretion, grant permission to individuals considered legally disabled to use motorized or mechanized vehicles off of existing routes.

For these purposes, an existing route is defined as one that is included in the GFO road and trail inventory as of January 12, 2001, or BLM determines existed and should have been included as of that date. If the public encounters a route that is easily recognizable on the ground and has been routinely traveled it can continue to be used unless the BLM determines that it was created after January 12, 2001. Any routes created after that date without specific agency authorization will be closed to motorized or mechanized use. If the inventory overlooked a route or trail, it will be investigated to determine if it was easily recognizable on the ground as a route and had been routinely traveled by users as of January 12, 2001, and if so determined, it will be added to the inventory. The vehicles or devices affected by these designations include 2 or 4-wheel drive motorized passenger vehicles, motorcycles, multi-wheeled all-terrain vehicles, and mountain bikes. It will also include future technology not currently in regular use such as hovercraft, trail skates, trail skateboards etc. This definition includes any vehicle or device being used to travel cross-country or off established routes, regardless of the type of use the vehicle was designed and intended for.

Some roads or routes normally or routinely closed during part of the year will continue to be kept closed in the spring or other seasons until resource damage would likely not occur. Emergency road closures will occur if unacceptable resource damage occurs. The BLM will continue to recognize and respond to the need for seasonal closures in the planning area in order to prevent or mitigate potential resource damage by installing gates at key access points, for instance, to restrict spring access until roads have dried out. The attached map shows the areas in the GFO affected by the proposed amendment.

MANAGEMENT UNITS AND PRESCRIPTIONS AFFECTED BY THIS PROPOSED AMENDMENT IN THE GUNNISON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Management Unit 1 (Part of Alpine Triangle SRMA)

Land ownership: 95,827 acres of public surface

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

Motorized vehicular traffic on public lands within the unit south of the north line of Section 12, T. 45 N., R. 4 W., N. M. P. M., will be limited to designated routes in order to prevent potential impacts from this type of use, as shown on a map and Table F-1 in Appendix F of the RMP, and in maps in the Gunnison Resource Area office. Snowmobile use will be permitted on snow anywhere in the unit, except in any lands designated as wilderness. When the CRMAP for the Alpine Triangle SRMA is prepared, a map will be included and areas defined on the ground delineating appropriate pull-off and parking areas adjacent to designated routes available for OHV use.

[The remaining 14,954 acres of public lands in the unit are currently open to motorized vehicular traffic]

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles on 14,954 acres of BLM-managed lands north of the north line of Section 12, T. 45 N., R. 4 W., N.M.P.M. will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

The use of wheeled, motorized and non-motorized mechanized vehicles, including mountain bikes on 80,873 acres of BLM-managed lands south of the north line of Section 12, T. 45 N., R. 4 W., N. M. P. M., will continue to be limited to the designated routes in Management Unit 1 as described and shown in Map F-1 and Appendix F, Gunnison Resource Management Plan, February, 1993, and in other maps in the GFO. Snowmobile use will be permitted on snow within the unit, except in any lands designated as wilderness. When the Coordinated Resource Management Activity Plan (CRMAP) for the Alpine Triangle SRMA is prepared, a map will be included and areas defined on the ground delineating appropriate pull-off and parking areas adjacent to designated routes available for OHV use. Overnight camping and fires will be excluded within 50 feet of historic resources on public land throughout the unit.

Management Unit 3 (Cochetopa Canyon SRMA)

Land Ownership: 2,710 acres of Public Surface

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

The management unit is currently open to all motorized and non-motorized vehicular travel. Management of motorized vehicular traffic is as stated in the standard management for the resource management plan on pages 2-13 and 2-14, Gunnison RMP, February, 1993. See the section above for this language.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

Management Unit 7 (West Antelope Creek ACEC)

Land Ownership: 28,275 acres of Public Surface; 5% of the Planning Area.

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

Approximately 600 acres of public land within or adjacent to the Sapinero State Wildlife Area will be closed to motorized vehicular use in order to be compatible with CDOW management on adjacent state-owned lands. Motorized vehicular use on the remaining 27,615 acres of public lands in the unit will be limited to designated routes, if necessary, from December 1 through April 30, to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer in the event of excessive snow depths or big game herd concentrations. These designations and routes are shown on maps and Table F-1 in Appendix F of the RMP and on maps in the Gunnison Resource Area office.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Approximately 600 acres of public land within or adjacent to the Sapinero State Wildlife Area will continue to be closed to wheeled, motorized vehicular use in order to be compatible with existing CDOW management on adjacent state-owned lands. Mechanized wheeled vehicle use, including mountain bikes, is also prohibited within these 600 acres. On the remaining 27,675 acres of public land in the unit, use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

If necessary, motorized or non-motorized, mechanical wheeled vehicular use including snowmobiles on these remaining 27,675 acres of public lands in the unit will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer in the event of excessive snow depths or big game herd concentrations. During the periods this seasonal limitation will be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose. These designations and routes are shown on map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP, 1993.

MANAGEMENT UNIT 10

Land Ownership: 15,112 acres of Public Surface; 3% of the Planning Area

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

The management unit is currently open to all motorized and non-motorized vehicular travel. Management of motorized vehicular traffic, as stated in the standard management for the resource management plan on pages 2-13 and 2-14, Gunnison RMP, February, 1993. See the section above for this language.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

MANAGEMENT UNIT 11

Land ownership: 57,525 acres of Public Surface; 10% of the Planning Area

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

The management unit is currently open to all motorized and non-motorized vehicular travel. Management of motorized vehicular traffic is as stated in the standard management for the resource management plan on pages 2-13 and 2-14, Gunnison RMP, February, 1993. See the section above for this language.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

MANAGEMENT UNIT 12

Land ownership: 91,547 acres of public surface; 16% of the Planning Area.

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

Motorized vehicular traffic on public lands in the unit north of U.S. Highway 50, east of the Gunnison River and west of Quartz Creek will be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, if necessary, due to big game herd concentrations or excessive snow depth, to prevent disturbance to wintering deer and elk. This designation and these routes are shown on a map and in Table F-1 in Appendix F of the RMP and on maps in the Gunnison Resource Area office.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

If necessary, all motorized or non-motorized, vehicular use, including mountain bikes and snowmobiles, on approximately 37,423 acres of public lands in the unit north of U.S. Highway 50, east of the Gunnison River and west of Quartz Creek will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer in the event of excessive snow depths or big game herd concentrations. During the periods this seasonal limitation will be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose. These designations and routes are shown on map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP.

MANAGEMENT UNIT 13

Land ownership: 187,030 acres of public surface;

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

Motorized vehicular traffic in the unit on public lands in the area north of U.S. Highway 50, east of West Antelope Creek, and west of the Gunnison River will be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, if necessary, due to big game herd concentrations or excessive snow depths in order to prevent disturbance to wintering big game. This designation and these routes are shown on a map and in Table F-1 in Appendix F of the RMP and on maps in the Gunnison Resource Area office.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

If necessary, all motorized or non-motorized vehicular use, including mountain bikes and snowmobiles, on the public lands in the unit north of U.S. Highway 50, east of West Antelope Creek, and west of the Gunnison River will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer in the event of excessive snow depths or big game herd concentrations. During the periods this seasonal limitation will be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose. These designations and routes are shown on map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP.

MANAGEMENT UNIT 14

Land Ownership: 2,667 acres of Public Surface (all riparian areas)

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

The management unit is currently open to all motorized and non-motorized vehicular travel. Management of motorized vehicular traffic is as stated in the standard management for the resource management plan on pages 2-13 and 2-14, Gunnison RMP, February, 1993. See the section above for this language.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

MANAGEMENT UNIT 15

Land Ownership: 4,725 acres of Public Surface (all riparian areas)

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

Motorized vehicular traffic in the unit will be managed as follows. These designations and routes are shown on maps and in Table F-1 in Appendix F of the RMP and on maps in the Gunnison Resource Area office.

1. Motorized vehicular traffic south of Lake City (1,680 acres) will be limited to designated routes yearlong, with snowmobile use permitted on snow, and when the CRMAP is prepared for the Alpine Triangle SRMA, a map will be included and areas defined on the ground delineating appropriate pull-off and parking areas adjacent to designated routes;
2. Motorized vehicular traffic in the unit on Alder Creek (235 acres) will be limited to designated routes, if necessary, from December 1 through April 30, in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer on crucial big game winter range.

[The remaining 3,045 acres of public land in the unit are currently open to motorized vehicular traffic]

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Wheeled, motorized and non-motorized mechanical vehicular traffic in the unit will be managed as follows. These designations and routes are shown on map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP.

1. Wheeled, motorized vehicular traffic, south of Lake City (1,680 acres) will continue to be limited to designated routes year-long. Snowmobile use is permitted on snow except in wilderness areas. When the CRMAP is prepared for the Alpine Triangle SRMA, a map will be included and areas defined on the ground delineating appropriate pull-off and parking areas adjacent to designated routes;
2. In the remainder of the unit use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

3. If necessary, all cross-country, off-route travel using motorized and non-motorized vehicles, including mountain bikes and snowmobiles, in the Alder Creek area (235 acres) will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer on crucial big game winter range. During the periods this seasonal limitation will be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose. See Map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP.

MANAGEMENT UNIT 16

Land Ownership: 36,768 acres of Public Surface

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993

Motorized vehicular traffic on public lands in the unit north of U.S. Highway 50, south of sections 17 and 18, T. 51 N, R. 1 W., N.M.P.M., east of West Antelope Creek, and west of the Gunnison River only (3,073 acres) will be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30 if necessary, due to excessive snow depths or herd concentrations in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer.

[The remaining 33,695 acres of public land in the unit are currently open to motorized vehicular traffic]

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

1. Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).
2. If necessary, in the area north of U.S. Highway 50, south of sections 17 and 18, T. 51 N, R. 1 W., N.M.P.M., east of West Antelope Creek, and west of the Gunnison River only (3,073 acres), all travel using motorized and non-motorized mechanized vehicles, including mountain bikes and snowmobiles, will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30. This situation will be triggered by excessive snow depths or herd concentrations in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer. During the periods this seasonal limitation would be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose.

The management unit is currently open to all motorized and non-motorized vehicular travel. Management of motorized vehicular traffic is as stated in the standard management for the resource management plan on pages 2-13 and 2-14, Gunnison RMP, February, 1993. See the section above for this language.

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

MANAGEMENT UNIT 15

Land Ownership: 4,725 acres of Public Surface (all riparian areas)

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993:

Motorized vehicular traffic in the unit will be managed as follows. These designations and routes are shown on maps and in Table F-1 in Appendix F of the RMP and on maps in the Gunnison Resource Area office.

1. Motorized vehicular traffic south of Lake City (1,680 acres) will be limited to designated routes yearlong, with snowmobile use permitted on snow, and when the CRMAP is prepared for the Alpine Triangle SRMA, a map will be included and areas defined on the ground delineating appropriate pull-off and parking areas adjacent to designated routes;
2. Motorized vehicular traffic in the unit on Alder Creek (235 acres) will be limited to designated routes, if necessary, from December 1 through April 30, in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer on crucial big game winter range.

[The remaining 3,045 acres of public land in the unit are currently open to motorized vehicular traffic]

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

Wheeled, motorized and non-motorized mechanical vehicular traffic in the unit will be managed as follows. These designations and routes are shown on map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP.

1. Wheeled, motorized vehicular traffic, south of Lake City (1,680 acres) will continue to be limited to designated routes year-long. Snowmobile use is permitted on snow except in wilderness areas. When the CRMAP is prepared for the Alpine Triangle SRMA, a map will be included and areas defined on the ground delineating appropriate pull-off and parking areas adjacent to designated routes;
2. In the remainder of the unit use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

3. If necessary, all cross-country, off-route travel using motorized and non-motorized vehicles, including mountain bikes and snowmobiles, in the Alder Creek area (235 acres) will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30, in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer on crucial big game winter range. During the periods this seasonal limitation will be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose. See Map F-1, Page F-3, Gunnison RMP.

MANAGEMENT UNIT 16

Land Ownership: 36,768 acres of Public Surface

Description of the motorized vehicular traffic language for the unit in the Gunnison RMP dated February, 1993

Motorized vehicular traffic on public lands in the unit north of U.S. Highway 50, south of sections 17 and 18, T. 51 N, R. 1 W., N.M.P.M., east of West Antelope Creek, and west of the Gunnison River only (3,073 acres) will be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30 if necessary, due to excessive snow depths or herd concentrations in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer.

[The remaining 33,695 acres of public land in the unit are currently open to motorized vehicular traffic]

Description of the Proposed Amendment for the management unit.

1. Use by motorized and mechanized vehicles will be limited to existing routes as described under standard management for the Resource Management Plan (amended 2001).

2. If necessary, in the area north of U.S. Highway 50, south of sections 17 and 18, T. 51 N, R. 1 W., N.M.P.M., east of West Antelope Creek, and west of the Gunnison River only (3,073 acres), all travel using motorized and non-motorized mechanized vehicles, including mountain bikes and snowmobiles, will continue to be limited to designated routes from December 1 through April 30. This situation will be triggered by excessive snow depths or herd concentrations in order to prevent disturbance to wintering elk and deer. During the periods this seasonal limitation would be in effect, no vehicular travel will be permitted off the designated routes for any purpose.